

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 10839 190808Z
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2288
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 10839

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, CB, CH, VN
SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE-CAMBODIAN RELATIONS AND REPORTED CHINESE
COMMENTS ABOUT CAMBODIA IN HANOI

SUMMARY: WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CONFIRM A REPORT THAT A
VIETNAMESE OFFICIAL TRAVELLED RECENTLY TO PHNOM PENH IN AN
UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN CAMBODIAN PARTICIPATION IN AN
INDOCHINESE PEOPLES' CONFERENCE. THE CHINESE ARE REPORTEDLY
TALKING IN HANOI ABOUT THE EXTENT OF DEATHS FROM DISEASE
AND EXECUTION IN CAMBODIA, END SUMMARY.

1. FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW ISSUE OF MAY 20 REPORTS IN ITS
"INTELLIGENCE" COLUMN THAT SRV VICE FOREIGN MINISTER HOANG
VAN LOI RECENTLY TRAVELLED SECRETLY TO PHNOM PENH TO PERSUADE
CAMBODIANS TO PARTICIPATE IN A CONFERENCE OF INDOCHINESE
PEOPLE TO BE HELD LATER THIS YEAR IN VIENTIANE. CAMBODIANS RE-
PORTEDLY REFUSED DESPITE VIETNAMESE PROMISED OF GREATER
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 10839 190808Z

COOPERATION ALONG VIETNAMESE-CAMBODIAN BORDER, INCLUDING
REPATRIATION OF SEVERAL HUNDRED CAMBODIAN REFUGEES IN
VIET-NAM.

2. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO FIND ANY BASIS IN BANGKOK FOR
EITHER CONFIRMING OR DENYING THE REPORT. OLD, TRUSTED
REVOLUTIONARY LOI WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN A GOOD PERSON

TO UNDERTAKE SUCH A MISSION, HOWEVER, ONE IS REMINDED OF VIETNAMESE EFFORT AT COLOMBO NAM LAST AUGUST TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH CAMBODIANS TO HOLD SUCH A CONFERENCE, AT THAT TIME SUGGESTING--ODDLY--INCLUSION ALSO OF NORTH KOREANS. ACCORDING TO AN OBSERVER WHO WAS PRESENT IN COLOMBO, CAMBODIAN CHAIRMAN OF STATE PRESEDUM KHIEU SAMPHAN REJECTED THE IDEA THEN, AS WELL.

3. EUROPEAN JOURNALIST VISITING HANOI IN APRIL-MAY TOLD EMBOFF HOW IMPRESSIVE--ALBEIT/SUPERFICIAL--THE EXPRESSIONS OF GOODWILL ON BOTH CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE SIDES WERE DURING HANOI APR 17 CELEBRATIONS OF CAMBODIAN NATIONAL DAY. HE CONTRASTED THIS WITH PRIVATE COMMENT TO HIM OF ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS, CAMBODIAN EMBASSY THIRD SECRETARY SI VUTH, DURING SAME PERIOD IN WHICH VUTH RESPONDED WITH A SNEERING "DO YOU REALLY THINK SO?" TO JOURNALIST'S STATEMENT THAT RELATIONS SEEM TO BE ALL RIGHT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

4. IN ANOTHER PART OF CONVERSATION, JOURNALIST ASKED SI VUTH ABOUT FATE OF FORMER CAMBODIAN REVOLUTIONARY HOU YUON, GENERALLY BELIEVED TO HAVE DIED FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER AT ABOUT THE TIME OF THE TAKEOVER. SI VUTH REPLIED THAT HOU YUON IS "ALIVE AND ACTIVE IN AFFAIRS OF THE STATE." ASKED WHETHER HOU YUON IS PRIMIN POL POT, SI VUTH MERELY SMILED. ASKED WHETHER KCP SEC GEN SALOTH SAR IS POL POT, HE ALSO SMILED AND SAID SOMETHING TO HE EFFECT THAT IT DOES NOT MATTER WHO IS WHO. WHAT COUNTS IS THE PROGRESS THE STATE IS MAKING.

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 10839 190808Z

5. ONE WELL-INFORMED DIPLOMAT FROM HANOI TOLD US THAT HIGHWAY 1 FROM SAIGON TO PHNOM PENH IS NOW APPARENTLY IN GOOD CONDITION FOR TRAVELLING. HOWEVER, HE SAID IT IS THE VIETNAMESE RATHER THAN CAMBODIANS WHO ARE NOT VERY KEEN ON PERSONS FROM VIET-NAM PROCEEDING TO PHNOM PENH IN THAT WAY. (COMMENT: PERHAPS THIS REPRESENTS IN PART A VIETNAMESE DESIRE TO MAKE THEIR TWICE MONTHLY AIR SERVICE BETWEEN HANOI, SAIGON AND PHNOM PENH BEGIN PAYING FOR THE PHNOM PENH LEG OF THE ROUTE. IT IS WIDELY SAID IN HANOI THAT THE PLANES ARE VITALLY EMPTY TO AND FROM PHNOM PENH.)

6. JOURNALIST CITED ABOVE HEARD FROM SEVERAL SOURCES IN HANOI THAT CHINESE OFFICIALS ARE TELLING PEOPLE THERE--AND IN FACT, ONE PRC EMBOFF TOLD HIM PERSONALLY--ABOUT EXTENT OF EXECUTIONS AND DEATHS FROM DISEASE IN CAMBODIA. WHEREAS THE VARIOUS ACCOUNTS OF CHINESE REMAKS AGREE THAT THE CHINESE ARE CLAIMING ONE MILLION PERSONS HAVE DIED FROM DISEASE SINCE THE TAKEOVER IN CAMBODIA, THE FIGURE THEY CITE FOR EXECUTIONS VARIES BETWEEN 40,000 AND 400,000.

WHY THE CHINESE ARE PROVIDING THIS NEGATIVE INFORMATION
IN HANOI ABOUT CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRY OF AN ALLY IS
PUZZLING.
WHITEHOUSE

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